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ABSTRACT

Research is reviewed on systematic differences in expository styles due to cultural or linguistic diversity. The critique concentrates on the method of data gathering, the usage of the categorization "Oriental," and the description of English paragraph development. An investigation is reported that consisted of an analysis of the Japanese and English language versions of a newspaper column, which used a common 4-point organizational framework. The third point is the development of a theme which English compositions do not have. The concluding paragraph also violates English style constraints. In order to discover whether this style of writing is valued more highly in Japanese than in English, readers of both Japanese and English were asked to evaluate the organizational properties of several articles in their Japanese and English versions. Generally, English language raters found less unity than did Japanese language raters. It was found that a coherency device in Japanese was not translated into English. This finding suggested that a lack of unity appeared in the translation, where there was unity in Japanese. However, it is evident that a different set of rhetorical principles is operative in Japanese composition. (AMH)

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Contrastive rhetoric: Japanese and English

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

In this paper I will attempt to accomplish two related tasks. I will first attempt to document an expository writing style for Japanese compositions which is consistently evaluated highly, and which is different from any pattern in English expository writing. I will next attempt to demonstrate that the use of this pattern is negatively evaluated by English speaking audiences. I will conclude with a plea for further research along these lines.

In order to accomplish these two tasks, I will sketch in some necessary background, and will offer some critical comments on prior research.

Longacre 1976:200ff has effectively differentiated between 'logical linkage' and 'chronological linkage' in textual analysis. Chronological lin kage, the development of ideas based on elapsed time or on time intervals, characterizes narrative and procedural discourses. Logical linkage, the ordering of elements by importance or effect, is the basic organizational parameter of expository prose.

We may delimit expository prose, with Longacre, as that type of writing which explains a body of subject matter, and we understand that expository prose ranges from the familiar essay to the scientific article. I refer to the style of presentation used in expository prose as rhetoric, and claim that the rhetoric of a passage reflects the writer's view of the most effective means to organize the subject

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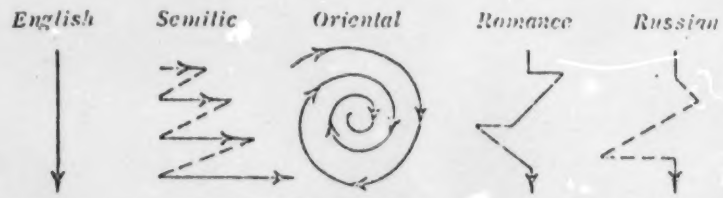
matter. In English there are conventional styles which are elaborated in any handbook on composition. The fact that organizational frameworks are imposed, or are prescriptive, in no way diminishes their impact on an author or their importance to that author.

My specific interest in this report concerns the systematic differences in expository styles which are evidenced as a result of cultural or linguistic diversity. The pioneering work on this topic is Kaplan 1966, an article entitled 'Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education'. With the perspective of fifteen years of hindsight, it is possible to present relatively strong criticisms of Kaplan's article. Any such criticisms must be tempered, however, by a recognition that this article stands virtually alone in the literature on contrastive rhetoric.

Kaplan's thesis is that native language patterns of rhetorical organization may be negatively transferred to English language compositions. He is properly cautious in his claims and observations. He states, "It is ... necessary to arrive at accurate descriptions of ... paragraph orders other than those common to English." [p. 14] In this spirit, he identifies five paragraph movements for five language groups. These are presented in (1) on the handout.

(1)



R.Kaplan, "Cultural thought patterns," Language Learning 16, page 15.

Kaplan is again properly cautious about the 'reality' of these

patterns. He states, "Much more detailed and accurate descriptions are required before any meaningful system can be elaborated." [p. 15]

Writers after Kaplan, however, have not been so cautious. Bander 1978:3 converts Kaplan's observations into proven statements. Bander says, "In following a direct line of development, an English paragraph is very different, for instance, from an Oriental paragraph, which tends to follow a circular line of development." Condon and Yousef 1975:243-4 are more skeptical in their acceptance of Kaplan's diagrams as absolutes, but even they state, "We might expect that if diagrams such as these are helpful they reflect not only the 'logics' of the areas identified but also something of the languages and cultural values as well."

Without doubt, Kaplan's article has had considerable influence on the field of ESL. I believe therefore that it is appropriate even at this late date to make several critical comments about the analyses presented there.

First, Kaplan's method of gathering data has provided useful practical information for ESL teachers in terms of expectations. His method was to have speakers of various languages write compositions in English. As a result of this exercise, we legitimately expect French students to write compositions in one way, and Arabs to write in another. This method of data gathering, however, does not necessarily say anything about the 'rhetorics' of the foreign language. That is, the performance of a student in English composition may or <u>may not</u> reflect how that composition would be organized in the native language. In recent years, we have recognized that at least some errors in the target language are not the result of negative transfer from

the native language, but are the result of either developmental stages of an interlanguage, or incorrect hypotheses about the target language [see, for example, Bailey, Madden, Krashen 1974]. There is no reason to believe that the acquisition of writing skills is any different. In order to really 'discover' or 'uncover' the foreign language rhetorical patterns, it is necessary to examine compositions in the foreign language; compositions written for an audience which reads that language.

The second general criticism of Kaplan's article is that he has overgeneralized the term 'Oriental'. He has two different definitions in mind. His first definition makes 'Oriental' one of three basic language groups, and at this level 'Oriental' includes Chinese, Cambodian, Indochinese, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malasian, Thai, and Vietnamese [p. 6, fn. 11]. In his second usage, 'Oriental' refers to Chinese and Korean, but not to Japanese [p. 10, fn. 13].

Granted that Kaplan's article was written in the pre-language typology days, it is still difficult to see what linguistic, as opposed to geographic, motivation there is for his divisions. In particular, I question the grouping of Korean and Chinese to the exclusion of Japanese. Chinese has a basic SVO typology, while Japanese and Korean have SOV. Chinese is topic-prominent, while Japanese and Korean share the property of being both topic- and subject-prominent [see Li and Thompson 1976]. His more general term 'Oriental' causes even more problems since it includes members of four language families: Sino-Tibetan (Mandarin), Austro-Asiatic (Cambodian and Vietnamese), Austro-Tai (Thai, Lao, Malay), and Altaic (Japanese and Korean). It also includes the geographic descriptor Indo-Chinese. Again, it is not so

much that this faulty characterization has occurred as the fact that it has been uncritically accepted [see again Bander 1978].

A third criticism concerns the ethnocentric use of a straight line to describe English language compositions. Peggy Cheng, a student of mine from Singapore, has very effectively analyzed differences in English and Mandarin expository styles, and she concludes that English writing is most aptly described by a series of concentric circles emanating from a base theme. In this conception, the more important the idea, the closer it is to the center. She also sees the outermost circle as the peroration, enclosing the rest of the article.

At this point, I wish to move away from Kaplan's early article, and to explain a specific pattern of Japanese expository prose which does not exist in English expository writing [other patterns may be found in Hinds 1980, 1981, Sakuma 1981]. The primary data for analysis are taken from a popular newspaper column which appears daily in the Asahi Shimbun entitled Tensei Jingo 'Vox Dei, Vox Populi'. It consists of editorial comments about a range of topics current in Japan. The articles are written in Japanese by Japanese for the consumption of Japanese.

What makes these columns of particular value to this study is that the editorial board translates each of these articles into English for the English language version of the newspaper. The articles are translated sentence by sentence, maintaining the original organizational framework.

These compositions, like any compositions of moderate length, consist of sub-units. These sub-units are termed paragraphs. Following Sakuma 1981 I distinguish between the formal paragraph, which is

defined primarily by indenting practices, and the meaning paragraph, defined by unity of content. While both types of paragraph are governed by rules, the meaning paragraph is most clearly constrained by language-related concerns, a sentiment expressed as well by Longacre 1979.

Once paragraphs are defined as sub-units of a composition, the progression of these units can be charted. This progression of paragraphs in a composition constitutes, in essence, the rhetorical organization of the composition.

A common organizational framework for Japanese compositions is recognized by Japanese authors, and it is the one I will attempt to explicate here. This framework is termed ki-shoo-ten-ketsu, and it describes a pattern which originated in Classical Chinese poetry. This pattern is defined by Takemata 1976:26, and is presented in (2) on your handout.

(2)

A.	ki (起)	First, begin one's argument.
B.	shoo (承)	Next, develop that.
C.	ten (転)	At the point where this development is finished, turn the idea to a subtheme where there is a connection, but not a directly connected association [to the major theme].
D.	ketsu (結)	Last, bring all of this together and reach a conclusion.

Even at this point the relevance to ESL teachers has probably become clear. The third point, ten, is the "development" in a theme which English language compositions do not have. It is the intrusion of an unexpected element into an otherwise "normal" progression of ideas.

This is best seen through illustration. Before presenting an expository prose example, however, I wish to indicate that this pattern permeates much of Japanese communication activity. A popular cartoon series entitled Ijiwaru-baasan 'The mean old lady' often uses this organizational framework for its four frame sequence. To the extent that humor transcends cultural boundaries, confusions develop for the western reader because there is a tendency to equate the English cartoon punch line, which always comes in the final frame, with the Japanese ten, the unexpected point which comes in the third frame. This is illustrated in the four-frame sequence presented in (3).

(3)

I think I'll feel a lot younger if I get a permanent. [pāma de mo kakete wa kagaerimashō]
It's terrible, really, but in addition to a free permanent I also received 5,000 yen. [tada de kaketa ue gosenen mo itadaite warui wa. honto!]

The third frame introduces an unexpected point, and according to

the rhetorical style used here, must be followed by an explanatory conclusion. For western readers, the unexpected point constitutes the punch line, and further elaboration is superfluous.

With this perspective in mind, examine now the article entitled "Harmony in Driving". Each paragraph has a symbol on the left indicating its role in the ki-shoo-ten-ketsu schema. Note that the third meaning paragraph, marked by ten, consists of four formal paragraphs.

Harmony in Driving

(起) This columnist first learned to drive and obtained a driving license in New York City. At that time, what the driving instructor most naggingly stressed was "harmony." He said that the knack of driving lay first in harmony, second in harmony, no third and fourth and fifth in harmony.

(承) Ignoring the question of how to shift gears, he lectured, while on the road, on the importance of maintaining the minimum necessary distance between cars. There were times when this writer became sick and tired because he kept harping on the matter so much. It may be questionable whether American drivers actually place importance on "harmony," but at least that aged instructor kept insisting on it all the time.

(転) The most frightening thing in the accident in the Nihonzaka Tunnel of the Tomei Expressway on July 11 was that there were about 170 vehicles within the tunnel and most of them burned. Why were there so many as 170 vehicles within the tunnel?

In order to run at a speed of 80 kilometers per hour within the tunnel, vehicles must keep a distance of 80 meters between each other. If the vehicles had been running at 80-meter intervals, the total of vehicles on the two lanes from the entrance to the site of the accident about 1.6 kilometers away should have been 40 at the most. Since the expressway was crowded that day, the speed may have been less than 80 kilometers per hour. Still, 170 vehicles are just too many.

First, there was disregard of the proper distance between vehicles. On expressways, there are cases of vehicles running at 100 kilometers an hour with only 10 or 20 meters between them. Even if a driver tries to maintain the proper distance between vehicles, other vehicles cut into the space in front of that driver, immediately destroying harmony. Drivers are aware of the danger of a collision and pile-up but keep on driving, comforting themselves with the thought, "It will be all right." The piling up of such disharmony is dangerous.

There was also the fact that warnings were ignored. Immediately after the accident occurred, the panel at the tunnel entrance lit up with the warning, "Fire Outbreak, Entry Banned." But it appears that a considerable number of cars entered the tunnel after the warning had been posted. Did they speed into hell, unable to apply brakes suddenly because the distance between vehicles was too small?

(結) The preventive measures taken by the Japan Highway Public Corporation were grossly inadequate. Experts should be aware of what a lack of water for firefighting means in emergencies. They knew but closed their eyes to the fact. The psychology of, "It will be all right," on the part of the drivers and of the corporation caused this major accident.

The initial paragraph introduces the topic of harmony in driving. In the second paragraph, this topic is continued with an anecdotal account of the concern of the instructor with harmony in driving. The third paragraph abruptly changes to the accident in the Nihonzaka Tunnel, and the next three formal paragraphs continue to develop this theme. The third paragraph is related indirectly to the theme of harmony in driving, and this is affirmed by the last sentence in the fifth formal paragraph with the statement about disharmony.

The final paragraph forms the conclusion. It differs from an English language conclusion in significant ways. An English language conclusion, according to Willis 1969:41, cannot be 'bizarre or unduly startling. The tone must be consonant with the tone of the whole passage'. McCrimmon 1976:106-7 states that the conclusion can emphasize the main points in summary, it can draw a conclusion based on information presented in the preceding paragraphs, or it can evaluate what has been presented. The conclusion of "Harmony in Driving" violates all of these constraints. It does, however, adhere to the definition of conclusion advanced by Takemata 1976:26-7 for Japanese language compositions: "A conclusion need not be decisive [danteiteki]. All it needs to do is to indicate a doubt or ask a question."

Clearly, a different set of rhetorical principles is operating in the Japanese composition. Therefore, a legitimate question to ask at this point is whether this style of writing is valued more highly in Japanese than it is in English. That is, despite the fact that this article appeared in a major newspaper, it could simply be poorly written.

In order to investigate this question, I selected more or less at random several articles from Tensei Jingo which have appeared over the past several years, and made copies of both the Japanese and English versions. I asked readers of both languages to evaluate the organizational properties of these articles along five dimensions. Three of these dimensions were concerned with organization, and these are presented in (4). Readers were asked to evaluate each dimension on a scale of one to five--one being poor, and five being excellent.

Mean scores for readers of three of these articles are presented in (5).

(4)

		poor - - - -excellent				
1. Unity:	logical development and flow of thought	1	2	3	4	5
2. Focus:	staying on the topic without wandering	1	2	3	4	5
3. Coherence:	"sticking together" of major parts of writing, use of transitions	1	2	3	4	5

(5)

Vanishing "Toki"

	English	Japanese
UNITY	2.3	4.2
FOCUS	2.1	4.2
COHERENCE	2.4	3.9

White Gloves

	English	Japanese
UNITY	2.1	3.9
FOCUS	2.0	4.2
COHERENCE	2.0	3.9

Quiet and Noise

	English	Japanese
UNITY	1.9	3.2
FOCUS	1.9	3.2
COHERENCE	1.8	3.4

In preparation for my concluding remarks, I would like to discuss a potential difficulty with the methodology used in this paper, and then to suggest a specific avenue for research. In using translations of original Japanese articles, there is always the danger that the quality of translation may cause difficulties. While there is no doubt that the translations I worked with are skilful, in at least one

case there is an essential cohesive marker present in the Japanese original which is absent in the English translation.

Examine the composition entitled "Vanishing 'Toki'". The third formal paragraph has the statement, "The scientific name for the 'toki' is Nipponia Nippon," and this statement seems completely out of place. An examination of the Japanese original, however, shows that a cohesive device present in this sentence demonstrates its connection to the rest of the paragraph.

Vanishing 'Toki'

There is a fierce debate about what steps can be taken to save the "toki" (Japanese crested ibis), an internationally protected bird which is on the verge of extinction. Some people argue that all the wild "toki" should be captured and allowed to breed in captivity. Other people say if artificial breeding fails, it will lead to the extinction of the birds and that the best thing to do is to leave them quietly alone.

As we were thinking about the fate of the "toki," we recalled the story of Konton in "Chang-tsu." The king of the southern seas and the king of the northern seas visited Konton, the king of the center. Konton happily welcomed and entertained them. To repay Konton's good-will, the two created seven holes--for ears, eyes, mouth, etc.--in Konton, who didn't have a single hole. Konton died after the seventh hole was made. The king of the northern waters and the king of the southern waters made the holes with good intentions, but with frightening callousness. There was indiscriminate hunting with guns after the Meiji Era. And the indiscriminate cutting down of forests and the use of agricultural chemicals have robbed the "toki" of their habitats.

Many years ago it was possible to see "toki" in the suburbs of Tokyo. The "toki" was so well known to the Japanese people that the word "toki-iro" ("toki"-color, pink) was born. The scientific name for the "toki" is Nipponia nippon. Even if the whole world is searched, it seems that only six or eight wild "toki" will be found in Sado in Japan and only one on the Korean Peninsula. If the seventh hole is made, the "toki" will definitely become extinct.

Even if the "toki" are captured, there is no guarantee that the increased numbers of "toki" can be successfully returned to nature in Sado. On the other hand, there is also no guarantee that their number will increase naturally if they are left alone. What is needed most now is the filling in of the holes which were made one after the other. In other words, it is necessary to create an environment in which the "toki" can live.

The danger of extinction was pointed out 20 years ago, but there have been no strong and systematic measures taken to protect the "toki". We feel that no matter what is done, it is already too late.

Paragraph 3 of "Vanishing 'Toki'"

Japanese original

1. katsute-wa, tookyoo-kinkoo de-mo toki no sugata-o
once Tokyo-suburbs even-in toki 's shape

miru-koto-ga-dekita.
could-be-seen

2. tokiiro-to-iu-kotoba-ga umareru hodo,
word-called-toki-color be-born more-than

toki-wa nihonjin-ni shitashimarete-kita tori datta.
toki by-Japanese come-to-be-liked bird was

3. gakumei-mo nipponia-nippon de-aru.
scientific-name-too Nipponia-Nippon is

4. shikashi ima, sekaijuu-o sagashite-mo
but now world search-even-if

yasei no jootai no toki-wa sado-ni rokuwa aruiwa hachiwa,
wild 's condition 's toki Sado-on six or eight

choosen-hantoo-ni ichiwa shika nai-rashii.
Korean-Peninsula-on one except not-exist-seems

5. nanatsume no ana-o akereba,
seventh 's hole open-if

toki-wa kakujitsu-ni horobiru.
toki certainly perish

In sentence 3 of this paragraph, the use of the particle mo 'too, also' signifies that this sentential topic is connected to the thematic venture of specifying the intimate relationship between the 'toki' and the people of Japan. Thus, a translation which adheres more faithfully to the spirit of the original Japanese paragraph with respect to cohesion is, "Even the scientific name for the 'toki' reflects this connection; it is Nipponia Nippon." The Japanese word Nippon means, of course, Japan.

Thus, in addition to contrasting the overall rhetorical styles of two languages, attention must be paid to specific devices which code coherency. These are the devices which frequently resist adequate or direct translation, and as a result suggest lack of unity when there was strong unity in the original.

In brief conclusion, I have attempted to demonstrate a non-English rhetorical pattern which is evaluated highly by speakers of Japanese. I have suggested that this rhetorical pattern may be responsible for some types of negative transfer in English compositions. I have further suggested, however, that continued research is required to determine what types of negative transfer cause the most difficulty for English evaluators of compositions written by native speakers of Japanese.

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